

Good Afternoon Senator Gerratana, Representative Ritter, and Members of the Public Health Committee.

My name is Jacqueline Germain. I have been practicing as a Naturopathic Physician in Connecticut for over thirty three years. I am here today to testify in support of House Bill # 5534.

I believe that the time to update our 90 year old scope of practice law is long overdue. Providing the best care for my patients is always my number one priority. The proposed bill would certainly support my ability to provide many more primary care services to these patients who ask me for them on a daily basis.

I have had several opportunities to move to another state where the Naturopathic Medicine laws include prescriptive drug authority. I have remained here in Connecticut not only because of dedication to my patients, but to also work on updating our law, so that other Naturopathic Physicians will consider Connecticut a desirable place to live and practice.

We have a Naturopathic Medicine program at The University of Bridgeport. Our current scope of practice does not allow those dedicated Naturopathic Physicians to fully provide the services needed, especially in their clinics which offer care for the needy and poor who are seeking ways to improve their health. We certainly do not want the graduates of this program to leave Connecticut and head to Vermont or New Hampshire because they feel they have a better opportunity to actually practice what they are trained to do. Connecticut needs to attract a forward thinking population rather than push that group away.

Since starting my practice here, I have seen the need and desire for care by Naturopathic Physicians grow at a rapid rate. In 1983, I was in a small office in Middletown. Today, we are six Naturopathic Physicians with two offices. Patients come with more complex issues coupled with a desire to take more charge of their health through diet and lifestyle changes.

Many new patients come into the office with a list of medications that they are already taking. Most of them want to see if they can change their diet or lifestyle to either reduce or eliminate some of the medication. Without the proposed prescriptive authority, I cannot counsel them in changing their medication in any way. And I don't want them doing it on their own.

Far too often, I have to refer a patient back to their primary care physician or a specialist for treatment that I feel I should be able to offer. For the past thirty three years, I have practiced without all the tools that I was trained to use. The patient is inconvenienced by a visit to another doctor, has the expense of another co-pay, and treatment is delayed. I am fortunate to have a cooperative and supportive group of Medical Doctors that I can refer these patients to, but a lack of continuity of care persists.

The safety record for Naturopathic Physicians in our neighboring states where prescriptive drug authority is already established is excellent. We have continuing education and certification plans in place to ensure that this will be the case in Connecticut as well.

This is the third time we have come before The Public Health Committee to testify on this matter. I believe that it is time to update our scope of practice.

Continuity of care, maintaining lower health care costs and helping patients in a timely fashion can all be achieved by passage of this bill.

Thank you for your kind attention.

Jacqueline Germain N.D.